



# The Customer Communicator Web Extra



## Learn to be a better listener

Developing your listening skills will help you to build better relationships with customers, managers, and coworkers.

Listening is one of the most important skills that a customer service rep can have — and developing your listening skills will help you to build and maintain solid relationships with managers, coworkers, and customers.

In addition to the tips in the March 2016 issue of *The Customer Communicator*, trainer Kirk Miller of Kirk Miller & Associates shares his seven tips for better listening. While not all are new, they all bear repeating again, and again, and again.

■ **Keep your mouth shut.** “You can’t talk and listen at the same time,” says Miller, it’s as simple as that to get started.

■ **Recognize that listening is something you do for personal success.** Effective and conscientious listening will earn the listener power and respect — and it will get you the information that you need to be an effective performer and an effective leader.

■ **Become less self-centered.** “You are about the only one who believes that you and what you have to say are more important than the other person and what he or she has to say,” says Miller. “Maybe you’re wrong. Pay attention to what others have to say, and you may learn something new.”

■ **Work hard at listening.** “Most people will speak at an average of 120 words per min-

ute, and the average listening capacity is about 480 words per minute,” Miller says. “This differential causes our minds to wander when another person is speaking. If we can give the speaker a little more concentration, our minds won’t wander.”

■ **Don’t judge and don’t interrupt.** Suspend judgment while another person is talking. In fact, says Miller, “Pretend that everything the other person is saying is valid — it is, in the sense that the other person believes it is — at least until he or she stops talking.”

■ **Don’t plan your response while the other person is talking.** Most times you will need only a few seconds to formulate a response before you give it. “There’s nothing wrong with a little silence between the other person’s words and yours,” Miller says.

■ **Overcome distractions.** Ignore noisy surroundings and other distractions to stay focused on listening. “Remember how you feel when you are talking to someone who keeps looking over your shoulder to see who’s coming, or who repeatedly glances out the window or at the clock,” Miller says. “You don’t want to make someone else feel that way.”

■ **Want to listen better.** It’s a small investment of time and energy that produces an enormous return in understanding.

